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August 17, 2001

Mary Cottrell, Secretary
Department of Telecommunications and Energy
One South Station
Boston, Mass. 02110

RE: Rate filing of Berkshire Gas Co. (noticed July 19, 2001), DTE 01-56

Dear Secretary Cottrell:

This letter is filed on behalf of the low-income weatherization and fuel assistance network (described in G.L. c. 25, sec. 19), the Massachusetts Community Action Program Directors Association Inc. (MASSCAP), and the Low-Income Energy Affordability Network (LEAN), including Berkshire Community Action Council, Inc. (BCAC). It requests that the aforementioned parties be granted intervenor status in the above-captioned docket.

G.L. c. 25, sec. 19 (St. 1997, c. 164, sec. 37) provides that "The low-income residential demand-side management and education programs shall be implemented through the low-income weatherization and fuel assistance program network and shall be coordinated with all gas distribution companies in the commonwealth with the objective of standardizing implementation." LEAN was established among the member agencies of the low-income weatherization and fuel assistance program network, including BCAC, to provide the services required for implementing the coordination requirements of the statute. MASSCAP is the organization of community action programs that make up most of the low-income weatherization and fuel assistance program network. Members of both MASSCAP and LEAN implement the Company's low-income DSM programs, including education; they also counsel customers of the Company about rates and payment options, and arrange rate payment assistance (including LIHEAP) for Company customers. Many of the Company's customers, especially the low-income customers served by members of MASSCAP and LEAN, are having an especially difficult time paying their bills due to the significant increases in the past year in the price, and the price volatility, of the natural gas commodity delivered by the Company.

Petitioners are thus substantially affected by the level and volatility of the Company's rates because (a) their clients (or clients of their members) are more likely to require assistance as rates and volatility rise, (b) the efficiency, weatherization, education, counseling and payment assistance services they (or their members) offer are less likely to result in affordable utility bills for their clients as rates and volatility rise, (c) they (or their members) will be increasingly called upon to secure other means of assistance with utility bills as rates and volatility rise, (d) they (or their members) will be increasingly called upon to assist clients who have had utility service terminated for non-payment, and (e) they will be called upon by their members to assist them in helping members' clients as rates and volatility rise. Petitioners also represent the interest of their (or their members') clients in reasonable and stable rates that they can afford to manage and pay; clients are substantially affected by rates that they cannot afford to pay because they are unreasonably high or volatile.

The petitioners have questions about rate levels, allowable costs, and rate stability with respect to the above-captioned filing and seek intervention with the expectation of reaching settlement agreement with respect thereto. However, if settlement is not attainable, petitioners expect to file oral and documentary evidence on these topics (particularly the need for reasonable and stable rates and means to achieve them), contending that the Company's application is unlawful under G.L. c. 164. Relief sought would include disallowance of certain costs and a means of controlling rate volatility.

Wherefore, the low-income weatherization and fuel assistance network, the Massachusetts Community Action Program Directors Association Inc., and the Low-Income Energy Affordability Network, including Berkshire Community Action Council, Inc., respectfully request that the Department grant intervenor status to these petitioners.

Respectfully submitted,

The low-income weatherization and fuel assistance network, Massachusetts Community Action Program Directors Association Inc., Low-Income Energy Affordability Network, and Berkshire Community Action Council, Inc.
By

Jerrold Oppenheim

cc: John J. Geary, Hearing Officer
Steven Venezia, DOER
Emmett Lyne, Esq.; James Avery, Esq.
Elliott Jacobson, LEAN; David Lachowski, BCAC